

1 – Relationships Australia Victoria Client Information Sheet

Welcome to Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV). Please read the following information carefully.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

RAV provides a range of specialised family and relationship services. Descriptions of these services are detailed on our website and in relevant brochures.

Qualifications and internships

RAV employs qualified professional practitioners, skilled in providing these specialist services. All practitioners receive regular supervision. For most RAV services, you will receive a statement about your practitioner's qualifications. Please feel free to ask about his/her qualifications, training and experience. From time to time, interns/students undertake course work placement at our centres. The work of all interns/students is closely supervised. If you have any concerns about this, please talk to your practitioner.

CONSENT, CLIENT DATA, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Consent

You will be asked whether you consent to receive a service on the conditions in this Information Sheet.

Basic information

In order to provide a service to you, RAV needs to collect some basic information, including your name, address and telephone number. This information will be stored securely by RAV.

Client data

The Commonwealth and Victorian Governments fund RAV to deliver a variety of programs. To assist with planning, developing and evaluating programs, information you provide on your Client Details Form is forwarded to the relevant government department i.e. your main language, country of birth, relationship status, household, employment information etc. Before it is forwarded, this information is de-identified, which means that you cannot be identified from the data. Your personal information is therefore completely protected, as required by the Privacy Act 1988. If you would like more information about this process, please ask to speak to the centre manager.

For Commonwealth Government-funded services, the de-identified data is stored on the DSS data Exchange, which is an IT system hosted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. To view the Department's Privacy Policy, please visit the Department's website at www.dss.gov.au.

Confidentiality

In general, information you provide to RAV cannot be disclosed to anyone outside RAV without your permission/consent. Under Commonwealth law (i.e. the Family Law Act 1975, Privacy Act 1988) and other state laws, RAV's practitioners and other employees must maintain the confidentiality of all your personal information, with some exceptions.

The exceptions which permit disclosure of your personal information **outside RAV** without your consent are:

- reasonable suspicion of child abuse, or risk of child abuse – we have a legal obligation to report this to the Department of Health and Human Services (Child Protection);
- a risk of physical or psychological harm to a child;
- where it is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health (physical or psychological) or safety of yourself or others;
- other matters of a serious or criminal nature involving threats of violence, or threats of damage to property;
- if RAV receives a Subpoena/Witness Summons in court proceedings and the subpoenaed information may be admissible as evidence;
- pursuant to a Police Warrant, or if a court or tribunal orders RAV to disclose that information;
- as otherwise required or authorised by law e.g. where appropriate, as a response to a request from a legally authorised Information Sharing Entity for information required to assess or manage a risk of family violence.

Your personal information will be shared **within RAV**:

- for all the normal organisational and administrative purposes needed to provide you with a co-ordinated, 'best practice' service. For example, to transfer your file from one RAV centre to another, to refer you to a different practitioner or RAV service, to support your welfare across different services, for supervision of your practitioner's work, to handle a complaint; and
- where it is necessary to assess and/or manage a serious threat to the life, health (physical or psychological), safety or welfare of a child, yourself or any other person.

Please speak to your practitioner if you have any queries or concerns about disclosure of information outside RAV, or the sharing of information within RAV.

Privacy

RAV is an organisation that is bound by the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles. If you have any concerns about the privacy of your personal information, we encourage you to raise these concerns with your practitioner or the centre manager.

RAV's Privacy Policy is available free of charge, on our website at www.rav.org.au/privacy or in hard copy format, upon request. It contains information about:

- how RAV manages your personal information;
- how you may gain access to your personal information and, if necessary, seek correction of that information;
- how you may complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles and how RAV will deal with your complaint.

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

We invite clients to participate in the evaluation of our services after their time with RAV. This feedback greatly assists with review and planning our services.

RECORDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

To ensure our services are of the highest quality, your practitioner may request your written permission to record an appointment using visual/audio recording equipment, for supervision or related purposes. Recording an appointment provides an opportunity for feedback or reflection for the professional staff. Any recordings are deleted once supervision, reflection or feedback has occurred.

Recording of an appointment/session or any communication with a RAV employee using any form of electronic device is not permitted, unless there are special circumstances, and you have the written approval of the practitioner and all persons being recorded have knowledge and provide consent before being recorded.

APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Appointments for counselling usually take 50 minutes. Family dispute resolution (FDR) and some group appointments usually take two hours. Individual assessment appointments for FDR usually take one to one and a half hours.

You must provide at least **24 hours' notice** of any appointment cancellations. If 24 hours' notice is not given, a fee will be charged to cover the appointment.

FEES

Fees are not charged for some RAV services, however for other services, including counselling and FDR, fees are usually charged. These fees are based on a sliding scale according to your gross annual family income, or if you are separated and attending as an individual, your gross individual income.

Fees will be discussed with you at, or prior to, your first appointment, and are to be paid at the time of your appointment. If you are experiencing financial hardship, you can apply to pay reduced fees.

CHILDREN ON THE PREMISES

RAV abides by recognised Occupational Health & Safety practices. Our centres do not provide child care and do not have appropriate environments to care for children in waiting rooms. Children under 13 must not be left unattended, as RAV employees cannot take responsibility for children while a carer attends an appointment. If it is necessary to bring children to a centre, they must be accompanied by another adult who can supervise them at all times in the waiting room. We can provide information about local occasional childcare facilities, if required.

FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION (FDR)

Research informs us that it is not in the best interests of children to be exposed to the issues relating to their parents' separation. Therefore, unless children are attending an appointment at RAV to see a child consultant as part of an agreed FDR process, we do not permit children to accompany parents in attending FDR Information Sessions, individual assessments or joint FDR appointments.

COMPLAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

RAV is concerned if a client is dissatisfied with any aspect of service. If you have a complaint or concern, please:

- raise your complaint or concern directly with the practitioner; or, if you prefer,
- make your complaint directly to the centre manager, either orally or in writing.

If your complaint remains unresolved, RAV's Complaints' Officer will investigate and respond to your complaint. At this point, you will need to put your complaint in writing.

If you remain dissatisfied with how your complaint was managed within RAV, you can forward your complaint to the relevant external funding body, such as the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services, or the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. For further information, please request a copy the RAV Feedback and Complaints Brochure.

RAV also welcomes suggestions and feedback about any aspect of its services; this can be done orally or in writing by completing a Client Feedback/ Suggestion Form, which is available in the waiting area.

Relationships Australia
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